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## Media Release

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### **Delaware Department of Justice Lends its Support to Habitual Toll Evader Crackdown** Attorney General Biden pleased to support new coordinated effort

A tougher way of prosecuting habitual toll violators supports the coordinated efforts of the Delaware State Police (DSP), Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), and the Delaware River and Bay Authority (DRBA) to crack down on toll evaders on I-95, SR-1, and the Delaware Memorial Bridge.

DRBA Police and Delaware Memorial Bridge toll officials are working with the Delaware State Police and DelDOT to identify and share information on habitual toll evaders by using photographic images of license plates and motor vehicle records captured on all toll violators. Police and toll officials recently met with a prosecutor from the Delaware Department of Justice to review prosecution options for the most serious violators. Normally, toll evaders are prosecuted pursuant to State Law as traffic offenses; however, effective February 22, 2007, toll evaders who exceed \$1,000 in toll violations will be evaluated by the Department of Justice for prosecution of theft of services, which is a felony pursuant to the State Criminal Code.

"The Delaware Department of Justice is pleased to support the collaborative efforts of the Delaware State Police, Delaware Department of Transportation, and the Delaware River and Bay Authority to identify and pursue habitual toll evaders," Attorney General Joseph R. Biden III said.

The Delaware State Police and DRBA Police are announcing the first such criminal arrest of a habitual toll evader who will be prosecuted under the new guidelines:

On January 26, 2007, John Harper, 39, of Irvington, New Jersey, was arrested and charged with 136 counts of toll evasion at the Delaware Memorial Bridge. After being arraigned, Harper was briefly committed to Young Correctional Facility prior to posting \$2,720 in bail. Harper is scheduled for trial in June. If found guilty, Harper will owe the DRBA \$5,440 in toll fees as well as civil costs associated with these charges, in addition to any penalties imposed by the court.

On February 22, 2007, the DSP subsequently arrested and charged Harper with another 200 counts of toll evasion at the I-95 toll facility in Newark, Del. He was charged with felony theft of services. If found guilty, Harper will owe the State of Delaware \$10,571 in toll fees as well as civil costs associated with these charges, in addition to any penalties imposed by the court.

According to officials from all three agencies, the public should expect to see more arrests in the future.

DelDOT Toll Operations Manager PJ Wilkins said, "This joint effort enhances our toll evasion enforcement efforts and helps to limit the loss of toll revenue that is so important to the operation of our facilities."

"Identifying and arresting toll violators prove to be a matter of public trust," DSP Cpl. Jeff Whitmarsh said. "It is the responsibility of every motorist to obey the laws of our roadway- which, include paying tolls where required."



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"Motorists who have received a DeIDOT and/or a DRBA notice of violation are encouraged to follow the instructions on the violation notice to promptly resolve the matter or risk arrest and prosecution for failure to do so," remarked Colonel John R. McCarnan, Police Administrator for the DRBA. Both agencies depend on toll revenue to operate and maintain key roadways and bridges in Delaware.

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